Landmark PreMED study ready for lift-off

The much-anticipated Prevention of Macular Edema (PreMED) after cataract surgery study is ready to move to the next phase of development after the formal signing of the research funding contract during the XXX Congress of the ESCRS.

The potentially ground-breaking European multicentre, randomised study, which is being funded by a substantial grant from the ESCRS, could help to transform the current clinical management of cystoid macular edema (CME).

The PreMED surgery study is an initiative of the Medical University Centre Maastricht, the Netherlands, under the supervision of Rudy Nuijts MD, PhD, together with clinical epidemiologist Dr Jan Schouten and health economist Dr Frank J H M van den Biggelaar.

“It is an exciting development and we are very proud that our proposal was selected by the External Review Committee and the Research Committee of the ESCRS as one of the studies that has the potential to be of real benefit to our patients," said Dr Nuijts, noting that the study will seek to answer some critical questions relating to cystoid macular edema.

“Cystoid macular edema remains a significant problem in cataract patients and especially in the diabetic population where the incidence in cataract surgery can be as high as 31 per cent. So the hope is that this study will give us more definite evidence-based recommendations for clinical guidelines to prevent the occurrence of CME after cataract surgery in patients with and without diabetes,” he said.

Dr Nuijts noted that while CME is a common cause of vision loss after cataract surgery, there has to date been no randomised controlled clinical trial comparing all the currently existing interventions and to investigate whether combining treatments may have an additional effect.

The control intervention will be phacoemulsification with an intracameral cefuroxime injection and postoperative administration of topical betamethasone for four weeks and topical levofloxacin for six days.

The duration of the study will be 36 months, at the end of which the researchers hope to have a much clearer picture as to the optimum treatment regimen for cataract patients with and without diabetes mellitus.

“Most surgeons in Europe are still using combinations of non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDS) together with topical steroids. The question is, of course, for how long and how often we can administer these treatments,” he said.

An exciting conference can recharge our cerebral batteries

It was a whirlwind of a week, but our love affair with Milano is coming to an end. It will be difficult to part, but, as the British poet Alfred Lord Tennyson said. “Tis better to have loved and lost, than never to have loved at all.” And so we’ll all return home, richer in knowledge and experience than when we arrived. But what will we bring back with us? Will we have learned anything? Will what we saw and heard stick in our minds long enough for us to use it in daily practice back home?

Maybe so, maybe not, but maybe that’s missing one of the crucial points of a conference. Maybe one of the main goals isn’t only to gain knowledge in the traditional sense, but to ignite our passion and enthusiasm for our field. The Irish poet, William Butler Yeats, said that “Education is not filling a bucket, but lighting a fire.” Indeed, a large, exciting conference can recharge our cerebral batteries. If we are lucky, we will spend the many hours of our homeward travels reading up on the topics that sparked our interest. If you purchased a new book or received the current edition of your favorite journal, you’ll now have a moment of peace on the airplane to read it and maintain the intellectual afterglow. After all, “Knowledge comes, but wisdom lingers”, (Tennyson), but it must be maintained. Reading achieves that maintenance.

At every conference, I agree with Yeats’ assertion that "There are no strangers here; Only friends you haven’t yet met.” Any one of the many thousands of doctors, like-minded in their goal of medical knowledge, surgical precision and quality care could potentially be a colleague or comrade. The author, CS Lewis, said “Friendship is born at that moment when one person says to another: What! You too? I thought I was the only one.”

Of course, it’s not just the conference that we’ll miss. Milan, with its intense coffee in the cafés, well-dressed citizens on the sidewalks and roaring Ducati motorcycles in the streets, will have made an impression on anyone with a heartbeat. Yes, many of us will have wished, at one moment or another this week, that we were just a little bit more Italian.

The smart ones among us have made the conference in Milan the first step of a summer’s end Italian vacation. Others will soon be planning trips back to Italy, or at least scanning ophthalmology event calendars for the next conferences to be held here. The rest of us will simply be content knowing that it was once said that, “A man who has not been in Italy, is always conscious of an inferiority,” (British writer Samuel Johnson). He realised that back in the 1700s, before the Duomo was finished; before Ferraris were invented; and before there were inexpensive airlines to allow us all to indulge in Italy every year, ophthalmology conference or not.